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(16) (NEW) The method of Claim 13, wherein the step of creating the information template further comprises the step of:

specifying a plurality of attributes related to the interrelationship of the product to other products.

REMARKS

Through examination and careful review of the application by the Examiner is noted and appreciated.

Drawing Amendments

FIG. 1 has been amended as shown in the one marked up substitute drawing sheet attached herewith.

FIG. 1 has been amended as shown in red of the marked-up substitute drawing sheet for FIG. 1 to comport with the specification.

In Fig. 1, Step 20 and Step 22 have been amended to comport with the originally submitted and newly amended Claim 1, and with the originally submitted and the newly amended specification.

The text "SEARCH FOR SUPPLIERS" for step 20 as originally shown in FIG. 1 has been amended as shown in red of the marked-up substitute drawing sheet for FIG. 1 to the following text "IDENTIFYING A PLURALITY OF SUPPLIERS" as supported by the originally specification page 7, lines 19-24.

Additionally, the arrow originally pointing from step 20 to step 22 has been deleted and a new arrow pointing from step 20 to a newly added step 29 has been added as shown in red of the marked-up substitute drawing sheet for FIG. 1.

The text "CREATE PERMISSIBLE COMBINATIONS" for step 22 as originally shown in FIG. 1 has been amended as shown in red of the marked-up substitute drawing sheet for FIG. 1 to the following text "IDENTIFYING AT LEAST ONE SUPPLIER" as supported by the originally specification page 7, lines 25-26 through page 8, lines 1-2.

Additionally, the arrow originally pointing from step 22 to step 24 has been deleted and a new arrow pointing from step 22 to a newly added step 58 has been added as shown in red of the marked-up substitute drawing sheet for FIG. 1.

Step 29, associated box having text "CREATING AN INFORMATION TEMPLATE" and associated arrow pointing from Step 29 to a newly added step 40 has been added as shown in red of the marked-up substitute drawing sheet for FIG. 1. The support for this addition is found in the original specification, page 9, lines 17-19.

Step 40, associated box and text "SEARCHING EACH OF THE INFORMATION TEMPLATES" and associated arrow pointing from Step 40 to amended step 22 has been added as shown in red of the marked-up substitute drawing sheet for FIG. 1. The support

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for this addition is found in the original specification, page 9, lines 22-26.

Step 58, associated box and text "CAUSING A DESIGN FILE TO BE CREATED" and associated arrow pointing from Step 58 to a newly added step 60 has been added as shown in red of the marked-up substitute drawing sheet for FIG. 1. The support for this addition is found in newly amended Claim 1, the originally submitted Claim 3, and Applicants' originally submitted specification, page 10, lines 1-5.

Step 60, associated box and text "TRANSMITTING DESIGN FILE" and associated arrow pointing from Step 60 to a newly added step 62 has been added as shown in red of the marked-up substitute drawing sheet for FIG. 1. The support for this addition is found in the originally submitted application page 10, lines 1-2.

Step 62, associated box and text "SELECTIVELY USING DESIGN FILE TO CREATE 3D PROTOTYPE" and associated arrow pointing from Step 62 to a newly added step 64 has been added as shown in red of the marked-up substitute drawing sheet for FIG. 1. The support for this addition is found in the originally submitted application page 10, lines 5-7.

Step 64, associated box and text "STORING 3D PROTOTYPE OF PRODUCT IN TEMPLATE DATABASE" and associated arrow pointing from Step 64 to originally submitted step 24 has been added as

shown in red of the marked-up substitute drawing sheet for FIG. 1. The support for this addition is found in the amended Claim 3, the original Claim 3, and the originally submitted application page 10, lines 14-16.

Step 66, associated box and text "PURCHASING SAID PRODUCT" and associated arrow pointing from original step 26 to the newly added step 66 has been added as shown in red of the marked-up substitute drawing sheet for FIG. 1. The support for this addition is found in newly amended Claim 1, and Applicants' originally specification, page 8, lines 16-17.

Specification Amendments

With regard to the specification, a plurality of step numbers were inadvertently omitted in the originally submitted specification. Step numbers 29, 40, 58, 60, 62, 64, and 66 have been added accordingly.

"Step 29" was inserted on page 9, line 19 to describe the step of creating an information template for each component, product or final assembly produced by each respective supplier as shown in amended FIG. 4, amended Claim 1, and as supported by the originally submitted specification page 9, lines 17-19.

"Step 40" was inserted on page 9, line 26 of Applicant's originally submitted application to define the step of searching the information templates by specific components as

shown in amended FIG. 1, amended Claim 1, and as supported by the originally submitted specification page 9, lines 22-26.

The phrase "by causing a design file to be created (Step 58)" was inserted after "need of the organization" on page 10, line 5 to define the step of causing a design file to be created as shown in amended FIG. 1, amended Claim 1, and as supported by Applicants' originally submitted claim 3, and the lines 1-5 of Applicants' originally submitted application.

"Step 60" was inserted on page 10, line 2 of applicant's originally submitted application to define the step of transmitting at least one computerized design file associated which each component disposed within said product as shown in amended FIG. 1, amended Claim 1, and as supported by Applicant's originally submitted specification page 10, lines 1-2.

"Step 62" was inserted on page 10, line 7 of applicant's originally submitted application to define the step of selectively using the transmitted computerized design file to create a three dimensional prototype of the product as shown in amended FIG. 1, amended Claim 1, and as supported by Applicant's originally submitted specification page 10, line 5-11.

"Step 64" was inserted on page 10, line 16 of applicant's originally submitted application to define the step of

selectively storing the three dimensional prototype of the product within an associated information template database as shown in amended FIG. 1, amended Claim 1, and as supported by Applicant's originally submitted application page 10, lines 14-16.

"Step 66" was inserted on page 8, line 17 of Applicants' originally submitted specification to define a step of purchasing a product as shown in amended FIG. 1, amended Claim 1, and as supported by original Claim 1, and Applicant's originally submitted application page 8, lines 16-17.

Claim Amendments

In the Office Action mailed November 20, 2002, the Examiner rejected claims 1-7, and 13-15. By way of the foregoing amendments and the version with markings to show changes attached hereto, claims 1, 3, 13, and 15 have been amended. Accordingly, upon entry of this Response, Claims 1-7, and 13-16 are pending.

The changes in the drawings, specification, and claims do not introduce new matter but clarify matters shown and described in the application as filed. The foregoing amendments and following remarks are believed to be fully responsive to the Office Action mailed November 20, 2002 and render all currently pending claims at issue patentably

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distinct over the references cited by the Examiner. The foregoing amendments are taken in the interest of expediting prosecution and there is no intention of surrendering any range of equivalents to which Applicant would otherwise be entitled in view of the prior art. Reconsideration and examination of this application is respectfully requested in light of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks.

EXAMINER'S OFFICE ACTION

In the November 20, 2002 Office Action referenced above, the Examiner:

objected to the drawings under 37 C.F.R. 1.83(a); rejected Claims 1-7, and 15 under 35 U.S.C. §112, 2nd Paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention;

rejected Claims 1-5 and 13-15 under 35 USC § 102(e) as being anticipated by JOHNSON U.S. Patent No. 6,023,683 (hereinafter "JOHNSON");

rejected Claims 6-7 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being obvious over JOHNSON in view of Danneels et. al. U.S. Patent No. 6,272,472 B1 (hereinafter "DANNEELS");

rejected Claims 5 and 13-15 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being obvious over JOHNSON.

Objection To The Drawings

The drawings are objected to by the Examiner under 37 C.F.R. 1.83(a) because they fail to show the features of: "identify a supplier by use of said search", and "purchasing said product" as recited in claim 1; "searching said information templates" and fixing attributes of a product" as recited in Claim 13.

FIG 1. has been amended to alleviate the Examiner's objections by showing the features of "identifying a supplier" as Step 22, and by showing of "purchasing said product" as Step 66. Additionally, Step 20 has been amended to the step of "identify a plurality of suppliers". Steps 29, 40, 58, 60, 62, 64, and 66 and associated arrows have been newly added as defined above in the section marked "Drawing Amendments" to clarify the steps as claimed.

Examiner suggested that Applicant review all 10 claims to ensure that every method step recited is shown in the drawings. Accordingly, all pending claims have been reviewed and the corresponding drawings have been amended to comport with each pending claim.

Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §112, 2nd Paragraph

Claims 1-7, and 15 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, 2nd Paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention.

The rejection of claims 1-7 was based on the uncertainty of whether "a supplier" as originally cited in line 10 of the originally submitted claim 1 was a subset of "the plurality of suppliers" in line 5 of the originally submitted claim 1. Examiner suggested inserting after "supplier" in line 10 -from the plurality of suppliers- to obviate Examiner's rejection of Claims 1-7 under 35 USC § 112. Accordingly, Claim 1 has been amended to recite "creating an information template for **each of the plurality of suppliers; identifying at least one supplier from the plurality of suppliers . . .**; and purchasing said product from said at least one identified supplier from the plurality of suppliers.

The rejection of claim 15 was based on the uncertainty of whether "identifying at least one supplier of said several interconnected components" as originally cited in the originally submitted claim 15 is a single supplier for all components or one supplier for the component. Accordingly, Claim 15 has been amended to recite "identifying **at least one supplier from a plurality of suppliers for each of said**

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several interconnected components by use of said information template.

In light of amendments to Claims 1 and 15, Examiner's rejections under 35 U.S.C. 112 have been obviated.

Claim Rejections Under 35 USC § 102

Claims 1-5 and 13-15 are rejected under 35 USC § 102(e) as being anticipated by JOHNSON '683.

The rejection of claims 1-5 and 13-15 under 35 USC § 102(e) based on JOHNSON is respectfully traversed.

The JOHNSON reference is directed to a method of purchasing products from a supplier catalog, creating a catalog database of products listed within a plurality of supplier catalogs, wherein each product is displayed within an associated supplier catalog, and requisitioning an available product based on a best price from a selected supplier catalog. (See Johnson col. 4, lines 35-41, "a catalog database 36 comprised preferably of at least two vendor product catalogs. The catalogs, and hence catalog database 36, preferably include such information as part number, price, catalog number, vendor name or I.D., and vendor catalog number, as well as textual information and **images** of or relating to the catalog products." See also Johnson col. 5, lines 66-67 through col. 6, lines 1-3, "The data passed by

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interface 60 preferably comprise all or a subset of the following twelve fields: vendor name, vendor number, vendor part (catalog) number, product description, bid price, list price, keyword, page number, quantity, unit, catalog text, and catalog images.")

JOHNSON uses an interface to pass 12 fields from a supplier to the catalog database and then searches the 12 fields for products that match pre-defined catalog search criteria to form a purchase requisition. See JOHNSON col. 6, lines 5-22. The 12 fields comprise: "vendor name, vendor number, vendor part (catalog) number, product description, bid price, list price, keyword, page number, quantity, unit, catalog text, and catalog images." See JOHNSON col. 5, lines 65-67 through col. 6 lines 1-3.

Independent Claim 1, as amended herein is directed to a method for purchasing a product having the steps of:

- "identifying a plurality of suppliers;
- creating an information template for each of the plurality of suppliers;
- specifying a product and each component within the product;**
- searching each of the information templates for the specified components disposed within each product;**

identifying at least one supplier from the plurality of suppliers by use of said search;

causing a design file of said product to be created by performing the steps of

transmitting at least one computerized design file associated with each component disposed within said product created from each of said identified suppliers from the plurality of suppliers to a purchaser, and

selectively using said at least one transmitted computerized design file to create a three dimensional prototype of said product; and

purchasing said product from said at least one identified supplier from the plurality of suppliers."

Thus, amended Claim 1 clearly defines an interactive informational template used to search a product and at least one component disposed within the product to create a computerized design file. Support for Claim 1 is provided in Applicants' originally submitted disclosure as shown on p. 9, lines 17-22, and p. 10, lines 1-11 as follows:

"[T]emplates 50 are created for each component, product or final assembly which is produced by each respective supplier 36, 38 and are dynamically updated to allow modifications and changes to be made to the products and to

reflect the creation of new products and components." See page 9, lines 17-22:

"[C]omputerized design files may be transmitted by the potential supplier 36, 38 to the purchaser 32, effective to allow the purchaser 32 to ... selectively be used to construct a three dimensional prototype." See page 10, lines 1-11.

JOHNSON does not teach, disclose, or suggest that the images of a plurality of components be combined to create a three dimensional product. The visual images are transmitted directly from supplier catalogs are of complete products or components for **viewing or printing purposes only** by a potential purchaser. (See JOHNSON col. 10, lines 65-67 through col. 11 lines 1-6, "After the desired item has been selected from the Hit List 47 by double clicking on that item TV/2 search program 50 can be used to **bring up for viewing on monitor 22, or printing on printer 26, images and text from the catalog page on which the item selected is located**, For example ... [i]f the user double clicks on [a] highlighted page, the text shown in Appendix IV (and related images, not shown) would appear on monitor (22)."

Unlike the present invention, the JOHNSON reference does not use the supplier catalog visual images to create a customized three dimensional product to be purchased by a potential purchaser. Computerized design files were a

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technology available at the time the JOHNSON patent was filed (Aug. 10, 1994), however, the JOHNSON reference fails to teach, disclose, or suggest using such a technology in the JOHNSON purchasing method.

Independent claim 13, as amended herein is directed to a method for:

creating an information template having a dynamically configurable and searchable field which specifies a plurality of attributes related to an interrelationship of the several interconnected components for each of said plurality of suppliers, each of said information templates further containing information identifying the respective products and components provided by the supplier, a cost of producing each of said respectively provided products and components, and the time required to provide each of said respective products and components; and

searching said information templates in order to identify suppliers of said product and said several interconnected components.

Support for Claim 13 is provided in Applicants' originally submitted disclosure as shown on page 9, lines 10-15. "[The] [t]emplate further includes a dynamically configurable and searchable field 54 which specifies the

physical attributes of the item [product to be purchased] and a dynamically configurable and searchable field 56 which specifies the attributes related to the interrelationship of this item to other items or components."

Both the JOHNSON and the DANNEELS references fail to teach, disclose, or event suggest the use of a template having a dynamically configurable and searchable field which specifies a plurality of attributes related to an interrelationship of the several interconnected components. The JOHNSON reference discloses 12 pre-defined searchable fields used to create a catalog database, as discussed above, but JOHNSON fails to perform a search to analyze the interrelationship of several interconnected components. The JOHNSON reference essentially performs a search of the 12 pre-defined fields and produces a hit list corresponding to a best match of the 12 fields.

Unlike JOHNSON, the present invention considers attributes beyond the 12 fields defined in JOHNSON such as "the attributes or characteristics of the product and the components and any interrelationship attributes (i.e., attributes related to the interrelationship of the product to other products or components) are identified." See Applicants' originally submitted disclosure p. 7, lines 10-14.

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According to MPEP § 706.02, anticipation under 35 U.S.C. §102 requires that "the reference must teach every aspect of the claimed invention either explicitly or impliedly. Any feature not directly taught must be inherently present." Here, the JOHNSON reference cited by Examiner **does not** anticipate amended independent claims 1 and 13 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b).

Under 35 U.S.C. §102, to constitute an anticipation, all the claimed elements must be found in exactly the same way and united in the same way to perform the identical function in a single unit of the prior art.

Thus, the present invention, as set forth in the newly amended claims 1 and 13, is clearly distinct from the art of record.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that Claims 1 and 13 are allowable and that the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) based on JOHNSON be withdrawn.

Claims 2-7 depend from Claim 1 and are therefore allowable for the same reason that Claim 1 is allowable. Claims 14-15 depend on Claim 13 and are likewise allowable.

With regard to claim 3, claim 3 has been amended to further define the step of creating the information template to include the step of "storing said three dimensional

prototype of said product within an associated information template database."

As noted, the JOHNSON reference does not teach all of the limitations required by Claim 3. Accordingly, Applicants submits that Claim 3 is allowable and that the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) be withdrawn.

Claim Rejections Under 35 USC § 103

Claims 6 and 7 are rejected under 35 USC § 103(a) as being unpatentable over JOHNSON '683 and DANNEELS et al '472. Additionally, claims Claims 5 and 13-15 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being obvious over JOHNSON.

The Daniels reference discloses a dynamic linking system that facilitates communications between three system components: a supplier server, a reseller server, and a purchaser client web browser. See DANNEELS col. 4, lines 22-23. DANNEELS enables a purchaser to select a reseller from a list of resellers supplied by the supplier server to purchase a desired item from a reseller that sells the associated desired item.

Unlike Applicants' invention, the DANNEELS reference fails to disclose, teach, or suggest a purchasing system having the capability of using computerized design files to

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design a three dimensional prototype of a product to be purchased as disclosed in independent Claim 1.

Additionally, the DANNEELS reference operates to facilitate communications between a supplier and a purchaser so that a purchaser may selectively choose an appropriate reseller from which to purchase a supplier's products. Applicants' invention does not require such an intermediary reseller to purchase products from a supplier, and therefore a purchaser using applicant's system is not limited to the same constraints as a purchaser using the system disclosed in the DANNEELS reference.

Also, as noted previously, the JOHNSON reference also fails to disclose, teach, or suggest such a purchasing system having the capability of using computerized design files to design a three dimensional prototype of a product to be purchased as disclosed in independent claim 1, from which claim 6-7 depend.

With regard to Claims 6-7, Claims 6-7 depend upon independent Claim 1. In light of Examiner's reliance on JOHNSON and DANNEELS, amendment of independent Claims 1, from which claims 6-7 depend renders Examiner's rejection moot. As discussed above, Claim 1 is patentably distinguishable over both the JOHNSON and DANNEELS reference.

The references cited herein do not recite , disclose, teach or suggest the claimed features of Claim 1. Furthermore, there is no motivation to combine DANNEELS with the JOHNSON reference to render the claimed features of applicants' invention.

In Examiner's office action, paragraph 15, Examiner rejected claim 5, and 13-15 based on JOHNSON and based on "Official Notice that auto parts with part numbers are supplied from third party vendors . . . and selectively assembled in vehicles."

With regard to Claim 5, Claim 5 depends upon independent Claim 1. In light of Examiner's reliance on JOHNSON, amendment of independent Claims 1, from which claim 5 depends renders Examiner's rejection moot. As noted, Claim 1 is patentably distinguishable over the JOHNSON reference.

With regard to amended claim 13, as noted, Claim 13 discloses a template having a dynamically configurable and searchable field which specifies a plurality of attributes related to an interrelationship of the several interconnected components.

Also as noted, the JOHNSON reference discloses a template limited to 12 pre-defined searchable fields. The template used in JOHNSON identifies parts but does not define how each part has attributes that interrelate to other parts.

Examiner takes official notice of assemblies of components within vehicles, however, the Official notice does not extend to the use of a template having a dynamically configurable and searchable field which specifies a plurality of attributes related to an interrelationship of the several interconnected components.

The foregoing amendments further clarified some of the features of the method for designing and purchasing a product. It is believed that the present invention as amended is novel and non-obvious over the references relied upon by the Examiner.

Independent Claim 1 has been amended to further define the invention. Therefore, Claim 1 is now believed to patentably define over the prior art relied upon by the Examiner. Additionally, Claims 5-7 which depend from Claim 1 are also believed to be patentable over the prior art relied upon by the Examiner for the same reasons that Claim 1 from which they depend is also patentable.

Independent Claim 13 has been amended to further define the invention. Therefore, Claim 13 is now believed to patentably define over the prior art relied upon by the Examiner. Additionally, Claims 14-15 which depends from Claim 13 are also believed to be patentable over the prior art relied

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upon by the Examiner for the same reasons that Claim 13 is also patentable.

The newly added Claim 16 further defines the step of creating the information template and recites:

"specifying a plurality of attributes related to the interrelationship of the product to other products."

The support for claim 16 is found in Applicants' originally submitted disclosure p. 7, lines 10-19. It is believed that Claim 16 is distinct from the prior art of record.

The rejection of claims 5-7, and 13-15 under 35 USC § 103(e) based on obviousness is respectfully traversed. A reconsideration for allowance of these claims is respectfully requested of the Examiner.

Based on the foregoing, the Applicant respectfully submits that all of the pending claims, i.e. claims 1-7, and 13-16 are now in condition for allowance. Such favorable action by the Examiner at an early date is respectfully solicited.

Attached hereto is a marked-up version of the changes made to the drawings, specification, and claims by the current amendment. The attached page is captioned "Version With Markings To Show Changes Made." Also attached is one substitute drawing sheet marked in red to show changes made.

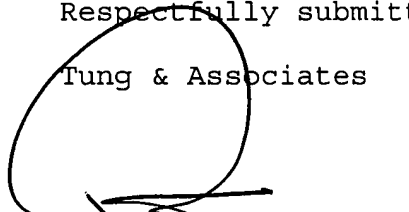
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If for some reason Applicant has not requested a sufficient extension and/or have not paid a sufficient fee for this response and/or for the extension necessary to prevent the abandonment of this application, please consider this as a request for an extension for the required time period and/or authorization to charge our Deposit Account No. 06-1510 for any fee which may be due.

In the event that the present invention is not in a condition for allowance for any other reasons, the Examiner is respectfully invited to call the Applicant's representative at his Bloomfield Hills, Michigan office at (248) 540-4040 such that necessary action may be taken to place the application in a condition for allowance.

Respectfully submitted,

Tung & Associates



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VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE

Please amend the drawings attached hereto as specified in red for FIG. 1.

Please substitute paragraphs in applicant's originally submitted application with the following amended paragraphs:

The last paragraph beginning on page 7, line 25 and ending on page 8, line 17:

Step 22 follows step 20, and in this step, all permissible combinations of components suppliers and all final assembly or products suppliers are dynamically and automatically created or identified. Step 24 follows step 22, and in this step, all of the products and groups of components which may selectively form the product are evaluated by use of the previously created tangible and intangible constraints. That is, the products and components which are "sourced" by these suppliers are "evaluated" in order to ensure that they respectively meet the previously identified technical and intangible requirements. The last step of process 10 requires that a recommendation be issued or generated which specifies the identity of the desired final assembly provided or combination of component providers. It should be realized that the supplier search may be done at substantially the same time as the attributes are created within step 18.

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The recommendations may be used to purchase and/or otherwise acquire a product (Step 66).

The first full paragraph beginning on page 9, line 25 and ending on page 10, line 16:

In order to allow the data or information to be efficiently categorized and acquired, each supplier 36, 38 is required to have a template such as template 50 in Figure 2. Particularly, template 50 includes a first dynamically configurable and searchable field 52 which identifies an item (i.e. a final assembly or component). Template 50 further includes a dynamically configurable and searchable field 54 which specifies the physical attributes of the item and a dynamically configurable and searchable field 56 which specifies the attributes related to the interrelationship of this item to other items or components. An intangible field 57 is also used to specify the cost, availability, and other intangible attributes. These templates 50 are created for each component, product or final assembly which is produced by each respective supplier 36, 28 (Step 29) and are dynamically updated to allow modifications and changes to be made to the products and to reflect the creation of new products and components. The information on these templates is then used, by purchaser 32, to determine whether a certain provided product or a certain

provided component in combination with one or more other components meets the needs of the organization (Step 40). In other non-limiting embodiments, computerized design files may be transmitted by the potential supplier 36, 38 to the purchaser 32 (Step 60), effective to allow the purchaser 32 to determine whether the sourced components and/or product meets the technical need of the organization by causing a design file to be created (Step 58). These files may also selectively be used to construct a three dimensional prototype (Step 62) as described within the text entitled Direct Engineering-Toward Intelligent Manufacturing edited by Ali K. Kamrani and Peter R. Sferro (Kluwer Academic Publishers), ISBN 0-7923-8338-9, which is fully and completely incorporated herein by reference. These templates 50 may also be manually searched by an individual, effective to allow for human cognitive product and component identification. Moreover, each template 50 may be selectively stored within a single database (Step 64).

In addition, please add amend claims 1, 3, 13, and 15 as follows:

(1) (Amended) A method for purchasing a product comprising the steps of:

identifying a plurality of suppliers;

creating an information template for each of the plurality of [supplier] suppliers;

specifying [the] a product and each component within the product;

searching each of the information templates for the specified components disposed within each product;

[identify] identifying [a] at least one supplier from the plurality of suppliers by use of said search;

causing a design file of said product to be created by performing the steps of

transmitting at least one computerized design file associated with each component disposed within said product created from each of said identified suppliers from the plurality of suppliers to a purchaser, and

selectively using said at least one transmitted computerized design file to create a three dimensional prototype of said product; and

purchasing said product from said at least one identified supplier from the plurality of suppliers [said one identified supplier].

(3) (Amended) The method of Claim 2 further comprising the steps of:

[causing a design file of said product to be created;]
storing said three dimensional prototype of said product
within an associated information template database; and

evaluating said design file before purchasing said product.

(13) (Amended) A method for purchasing a product comprising the steps of:

fixing attributes of said product;

decomposing said product into several interconnected components;

identifying a plurality of suppliers;

creating an information template having a dynamically configurable and searchable field which specifies a plurality of attributes related to an interrelationship of the several interconnected components for each of said plurality of suppliers, each of said information templates further containing information identifying the respective products and components provided by the supplier, a cost of producing each of said respectively provided products and components, and the time required to provide each of said respective products and components; and

searching said information templates in order to identify suppliers of said product and said several interconnected components.

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(15) (Amended) The method of Claim 14 further comprising the step of:

identifying at least one supplier from a plurality of suppliers [of] for each of said several interconnected components by use of said information templates.

(16) (NEW) The method of Claim 13, wherein the step of creating the information template further comprises the step of:

specifying a plurality of attributes related to the interrelationship of the product to other products.



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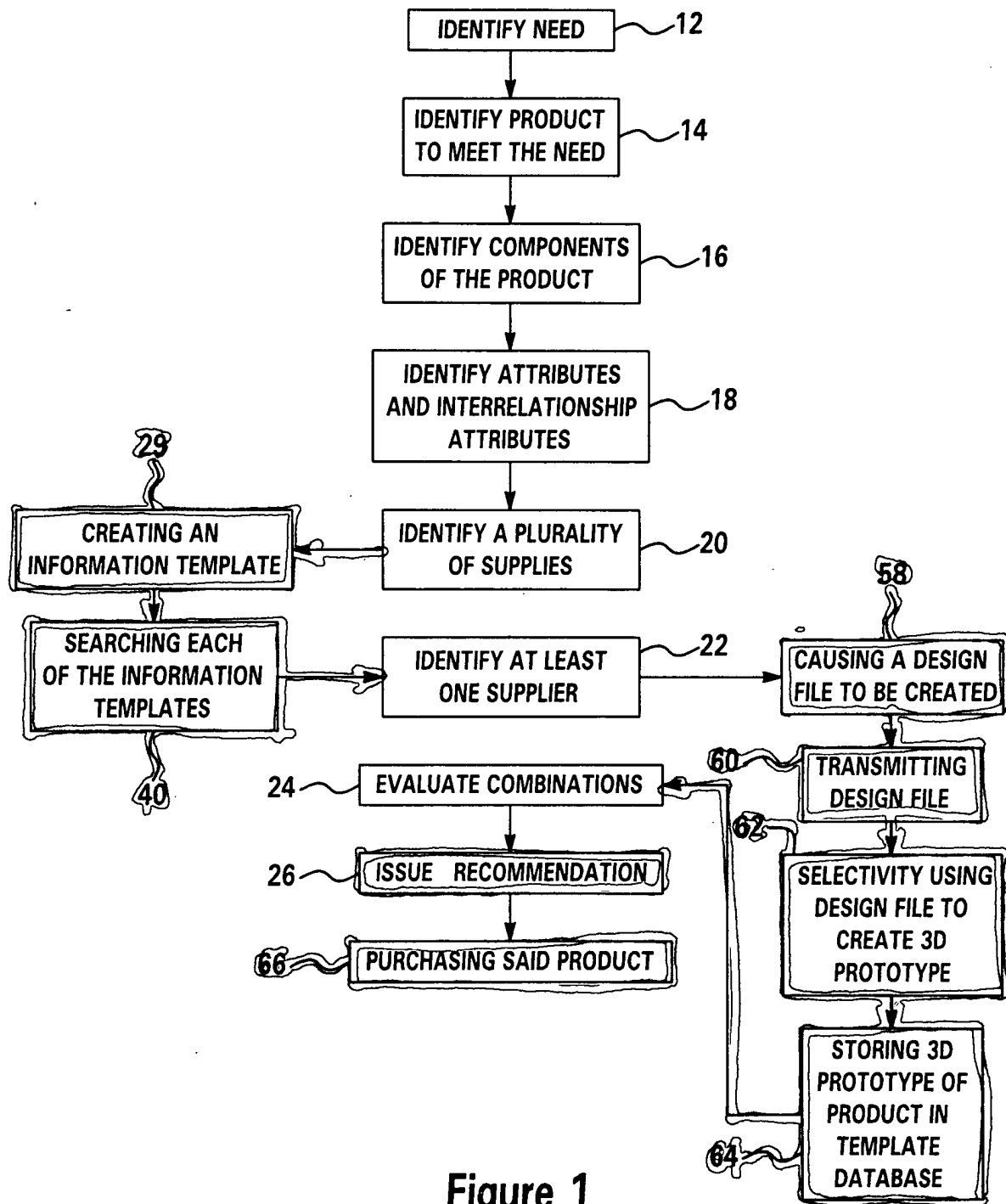


Figure 1